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SHOULD THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION BE SUPPRESSED?

BY PRESIDENT HENRY S. PRITCHETT

FOUNDATIONS for scientific, educational, and philanthropic service are not new in either Europe or America. Public attention in America has been drawn to them during the last ten years, not so much on account of their novelty as on account of the magnitude of some of those recently created. Six such foundations, chartered between 1903 and 1913, have a total endowment of three hundred and twenty-five millions of dollars.

Public attention has still further been directed toward these foundations by the inquiries of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations. That the national Government, through appropriate agencies, should scrutinize these endowments and look closely into their objects and their administration is most desirable. A wise and thorough-going scrutiny of every educational and philanthropic agency chartered by the State is in the interest of the common good.

Outside of the somewhat vague anticipations of harm which might come from the size of these endowments, various individuals and organizations have recently expressed doubts concerning their administration and tendencies. Such criticism as has been directed toward the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is due chiefly to the fact that its reports deal with educational questions, where wide differences of opinion are possible.

It may illuminate the difficulties that the administration of these agencies encounter and set before the public a clearer idea of their purposes if some of these criticisms are considered in the light of the purpose of the Foundation.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, holding its charter from Congress, administers the income of two endowments. One of thirteen million dollars is devoted to

the payment of pensions to college professors and their widows, in the three English-speaking countries of North America—the United States, Canada, and Newfoundland. The other, of a million and a quarter dollars, is devoted to the study of educational problems throughout the United States and Canada, and to printing the results of such studies.

It has been conceded generally that the payment of pensions to college teachers is a worthy object, although so far but little attention has been directed to a sound economic and social basis for such pensions. Such criticism as has been directed toward the Foundation has arisen almost entirely from the administration of its second endowment, growing out of the educational studies which have been made and published, such, for example, as the studies of Medical Education, Legal Education, the Denominational Control of Colleges, the Training of Teachers, and the System of Education in the State of Vermont.

The theory upon which this division of the work was inaugurated was briefly the following:

Most American colleges and universities are intensely engaged in institutional problems. The rivalry between colleges tends to emphasize local considerations. Until recently one class of institution, like the college, showed but scant consideration for any other class, such as the public high school. It was believed that an agency with a moderate income, studying education from the standpoint of the welfare of the whole country rather than from the standpoint of a single school or isolated college, which sought to learn the conditions in the various States accurately, to study them sympathetically, and to report upon them frankly, could render a service supplementary to the work of the teaching institutions.

It ought to be said that this effort has met in most quarters a most satisfactory educational hospitality. It has been welcomed by the great majority of high schools, colleges, professional schools, and universities. On the other hand, there have been decided opinions that such an agency is not desirable, that it interferes with the free development of teaching institutions, that its separation from local interests is a harm, not a help. That, in short, it ought to be suppressed.

It is quite clear that the president of such a foundation is not in a position to answer this question to the satisfaction of all. Devotion to one's institution is a form of patriotism so universal and so intense that one who deals with many in-

stitutions comes to have some doubt concerning any opinion that a college may have of its own work or of the work of its neighbor. The weakest college, the most commercial medical school, somehow persuades itself—with apparent honesty—that students are better served by it than by its better-equipped rivals. I have even doubted at times whether the Carnegie Foundation was indispensable to the educational salvation of the country!

While one responsible for the administration of such a foundation may, therefore, not be an unprejudiced witness to its value, he may be in a position to lay bare the situation in respect to the nature of the criticism and as to the purpose and methods of his institution. No one knows quite so well the direction from which the stones come as he at whom they are thrown, nor does any one know quite so well the intention of the administration as he who has been responsible for it. It is upon this basis that I venture to set forth some of these criticisms in comparison with the purposes of the Foundation.

A large proportion of the criticism directed against the Foundation must be left out of discussion on account of the personal element which enters. Many brethren in denominational colleges discovered the Foundation's supposedly harmful effect only after it had pointed out that their medical schools were stock companies. A committee of the Department of Normal Schools of the National Education Association viewed with alarm the "effort of the Foundation to control American education." The offense lay in the fact that the Foundation had raised the question, "What is the function of the normal school; is it primarily a place for the training of teachers, or is it a college of general education?" Just now, some of the local papers of Vermont paint the Foundation in very dark colors. This is due to the study of education in Vermont, made at the request of the State, the conclusions of which ran counter to a number of local interests. It is perhaps asking too much of human nature to expect the approval of a college president or a local paper for a report which suggests the discontinuance of a subsidy.

This sort of criticism can be laid aside. However honest, it is in effect the inevitable reaction against measures which contravene local self-interest. It would be impossible to make a truthful report concerning the conditions in any State, in any municipality, in any institution, which would not call forth somewhat of this outcry. Omitting attacks of this nature, it

may, I think, be fairly said that thoughtful, intelligent men who do not read the somewhat voluminous reports of the Foundation, but who get their information from the comments of the press, are inclined to ask questions something like these:

The Carnegie Foundation is an endowed agency, conducted by a self-perpetuating board of twenty-five trustees, composed in the main of university and college presidents. Undoubtedly, these are high-minded and well-meaning men, but they intrust their administration in large measure to executive officers. Furthermore, they conduct their Foundation under a charter which excludes from participation in its pensions institutions that are controlled by religious bodies. Under such conditions is it not likely that colleges founded in good faith by religious organizations may be tempted into an insincere position in order to secure the benefit of pensions? Is it not possible that by the use of pensions the college professor himself may be made less independent and free in his opinions? Will not an agency separated from teaching bodies and unfamiliar with local needs exercise an undue influence upon colleges and universities? In fact, has not the Carnegie Foundation already undertaken a somewhat arbitrary enforcement of college and university standards? Finally, these questioners ask, if there is to be an educational agency which scrutinizes and studies conditions throughout the country and prints reports concerning them, ought this not to be a governmental agency, not one conducted by a board of trustees which is self-perpetuating and which is the holder of an endowment from a single individual?

At the inauguration of the Foundation and in every report since, it has been clearly explained that the endowment in the hands of the trustees can provide pensions for only a small proportion of the colleges of the country, and that by the terms of the gift only such colleges could be asked to share in these pensions as placed no test of a religious character upon the choice of officers or trustees. Since three-fourths of all the colleges of the country are related in one way or another to religious bodies, it has been perfectly clear to them from the beginning that they could not expect to share in the pensions provided by this endowment. The church colleges of the country, both Protestant and Catholic, accepted this situation in an admirable spirit. The various denominational bodies have co-operated with the officers of the Foundation constantly in all educational questions, and the Foundation has been glad to render them constant service. At the beginning, a number of

inquiries were addressed to it by denominational colleges chiefly to obtain information as to the form and nature of the conditions imposed by its charter; but with the exception of a very small number the attitude of the denominational colleges has been dignified and broad-minded. A very few have changed from denominational to undenominational charters; and, in nearly all cases, these changes were in progress when the Foundation came into existence. Doubtless, the form of the Foundation's charter has prevented at least an equal number of colleges from making such changes through fear of being considered insincere. The rumors of wholesale changes have been simply rumors. The attitude of the great body of church colleges toward the Foundation has been both dignified and sound. They have expected nothing in the way of pensions and have shown, on the other hand, the greatest readiness to co-operate in the study of educational problems and in the improvement of educational conditions. The entire experience, with the smallest number of exceptions, has been one wholly to the credit of the denominational colleges. They freely conceded Mr. Carnegie's right to give his money where he pleased.

The Foundation, on its side, has made every effort to show that this restriction in its charter has nothing to do with its attitude toward religion; that it related merely to a form of college government. The board of trustees has tried to translate the terms of this charter in the most liberal spirit. Recognizing that the number of institutions it could possibly admit was limited, it has welcomed many colleges whose denominational relations, although unofficial, are most active and rest upon long tradition.

In welcoming institutions to the limited list of those to which it can supply pensions, the Foundation has sought to distribute these not only geographically, but among colleges of different types. Of the seventy-three institutions which today share in the pension fund, some twenty are small colleges of the type of Middlebury College in Vermont, and Franklin College in Indiana. Some twenty-five are strong colleges like Williams College in Massachusetts, and Colorado College in Colorado. The remaining twenty-eight are about equally distributed between universities like Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, and Tulane University in Louisiana, and a similar group of the strongest universities in the country, whether privately endowed like Harvard in the East, or State-supported like the University of California in the West.

The apprehension that the professor in these colleges could be influenced in his attitude by the pension he is to receive rests upon two misconceptions; the first, as to the methods of administration. The teacher in these associated colleges does not deal with the Foundation at all. He deals entirely with his college, and receives his pension from the college exactly as he receives his salary. The other misapprehension rests upon a misconception of the character of the American college professor. As a rule, the university teacher in America has a fairly stiff back-bone. Nothing would so arouse his opposition as any effort, however indirect, to control his opinions about education, college administration, or any other subject. The sole opportunity the Foundation has to influence the educational judgment of professors is through its publications, and these have weight only as they are sound and prove in the end to be wise.

The specter of a baneful educational influence exercised by a remote agency upon the policy of struggling colleges and universities is one that has been successfully invoked in some quarters. It is not easy to show the public how far this conception is from what actually takes place, or how much more human is the process of the studies the Foundation makes. The vision of a foreign corporation sitting in New York, issuing educational edicts manufactured from questionnaires, is well calculated to arouse all our latent patriotism for what Professor Royce calls "provincial independence in education." What actually goes on is something like this:

When the Foundation accepts an invitation to undertake a particular educational inquiry, it associates with it for the purpose of that study such men as can be found, usually in the universities, whose experience and knowledge are believed to be of the greatest value in the field. In this matter, the universities have co-operated by allowing their professors leave of absence for one or two years. The group thus formed, together with the two or three men in the Foundation who compose its permanent staff, sit down in the most friendly conference with college faculties, trustees, superintendents of education, with State boards, with denominational boards, with Jesuit fathers, with all men who have to do with the solution of our complex problem of education. Out of this common contact of mind with mind, over studies made on the ground, there come, in the course of weeks or months, conclusions which may not be final, but which probably represent the best result that can be reached at the time. The local participant in this conference

gets some aid from the judgment of the man who is free from local traditions and local interests. The man from a distance, on the other hand, has his conceptions modified and made practical by his intercourse with the man on the ground. No man and no set of men can sit down in New York and report *a priori* upon education in Texas, or Nebraska, or Missouri. The man on the ground does not always look beyond his own yard. In patient, sympathetic, and intelligent co-operation lies the largest possibility of good.

In addition, there is an advantage to be had both for the country at large and for the local institution in the work of an agency which, while it seeks to be sympathetic and fair, is not afraid. Some of the conditions in education in our country have been wretched. Some of them are still so. In some States the real facts concerning education will never be made known until they are brought to light by an intelligent, sympathetic, but courageous outside agency which has the money to make the study, takes the time and care to do it, and is not afraid to print the results. The thorough organization of the alumni, the rivalry between State and endowed colleges, the fear of offending local interests, close the mouths of many of those who could speak the truth about educational conditions.

The experience of the Foundation in the publication of its study of Medical Education illustrates a situation of which the public knows little. When the reports upon the various medical schools were finally ready, copies of the proof were sent to the presidents of every college and university whose medical school had been described. There followed two months of busy consultations. Many of these presidents had no conception of the sort of medical school their institution harbored. Some of them were indignant. Some of them demanded that the report be suppressed. In every case their requests were met patiently and courteously with the statement that if there was an error in *fact* another examination would be made; and, indeed, in some cases two and sometimes three examinations were made before the facts could be agreed upon. But when agreed upon, they went into print. A few institutions preferred to wipe out their medical schools rather than see a truthful description of them printed.

It would scarcely seem necessary to speak of the Carnegie Foundation in connection with political influence, yet some of the criticisms passed upon its activities and some of the questions addressed to it by the Commission on Industrial Relations

seem to call for a word. To one actually in touch with the political activities of colleges and universities there is something humorous in the picture of one going down to a Legislature in advocacy of the ideas of a corporation bearing the name Carnegie or Rockefeller! The good college president who knows his State politics, who spends days and nights with the legislative committees, would enjoy that situation. It would be simply too easy.

An interesting demonstration of the usual process is now going on in the Legislature of Vermont, which has under consideration a bill proposed by a commission of Vermont citizens, which (although of great length and complexity) contains the more important recommendations put forward in the report of the Carnegie Foundation on Education in Vermont. The chief and convincing argument against the bill is the much-used slogan "Made in New York." So thoroughly has this spirit been aroused by active organization and by newspaper attacks that the Governor of the State and the members of the Legislature would probably feel themselves politically compromised if they conferred with one of the men who participated in this study. Yet some of these men spent months in the State and probably know more about the conditions than any one else. There is much dust in the air at Montpelier. One small college with an organized band of alumni can stir up more dust before the Legislature than two thousand public schools. And yet Vermont's problem of education is to be settled in the rural schools. For a generation they have been so conducted as to train men and women away from Vermont rather than to fit them for life on its farms and in its villages. The situation to-day is more difficult than ever because the country girl who has been the mainstay of the rural schools is no longer attracted by the small "wages" paid to teachers. She can do better elsewhere. These hundreds of country schools make the great problem. In comparison with this the question whether subsidies shall or shall not be paid to colleges or medical schools is relatively unimportant. But what claim have these isolated country and village schools to be considered? They have no organization. No alumni bring pressure on the Legislature in their behalf. No newspaper champions their needs. What chance have they in comparison with the movement conducted by the colleges, the normal schools, and the medical schools, with their graduates in every town? And all of these would be quite pleased to see the public-school question dealt with—after their wants are satisfied.

And yet the cold fact remains that somehow, some day, Vermont must reconstruct its rural schools, free them from politics, and turn their faces in the opposite direction if it is to live and prosper. Some day this work will be seriously undertaken. When that day comes perhaps the Foundation's Report will be of some use. The studies made by these foundations must achieve their result by a slow process. They can never hope to withstand the first sharp appeal to local interest. But if they are fair and educationally sound they will in the long run receive the support of thoughtful men in every State and help to shape a public opinion which will rise above considerations of personal or local interest. A patriotism will in time spring up which is wider than a college campus or a town or a county or a State. It is to this larger spirit that an educational foundation which has no widespread organization, no alumni, no constituency, must appeal. It must expect to wait on time.

The charge that the Carnegie Foundation has imposed upon the colleges and universities arbitrary standards is perhaps the one concerning which the most widespread misapprehension exists. College standards used in this sense refer not to those ideals of life and conduct which colleges seek to inspire, but to those objective tests which all colleges must maintain in order to carry on their work, such, for example, as the standards for admission and standards of examinations for promotion. With the fixing of such standards the Carnegie Foundation has little to do. These are set up and administered by the college faculties or by the various boards conducted by college faculties. The most that the Foundation can do is to bring such matters into the light. Above all, it has urged that such entrance standards be reasonable, that they be made with due regard to the high schools, and that they be honest. The Foundation has never attempted to dictate to any college what its standards of admission ought to be. It has not, however, hesitated to call attention to the wide discrepancy which has often existed between the standards laid down in the catalogue and those used in practice. The only standards that the Foundation has urged upon institutions of learning have been those of common honesty and sincerity.

Notwithstanding this, the Foundation is commonly referred to, even by its friends, as a "standardizing agency"—an expression which always causes a cold chill to run down the backs of the Foundation's trustees; for, as a matter of fact, the Foundation has steadfastly stood against mechanical standardizing,

and has insisted that there should be a connection between the objective standards which a college sets up for other people and the ideals of right and conduct which it maintains for itself.

Perhaps part of this misunderstanding has come from the use of the term "Carnegie units." In its first report, the Foundation approved and adopted the suggestion of the college entrance examination boards, that inasmuch as each year of the four-year high-school course is made up of three or four studies taken simultaneously, twelve to sixteen such studies would constitute natural units for the measurement of the work of these four years. The suggestion was immediately taken up as a means of comparing high schools and of estimating credits for college entrance in different parts of the country, and the phrase "Carnegie units" has become a very familiar one to college and secondary-school teachers. They have not infrequently been imputed to Mr. Andrew Carnegie himself—a sin of which he should be absolved. In the main they serve a useful purpose, but they have undoubtedly given to many an impression that the Foundation was in the first place establishing artificial standards for colleges, and, in the second place, was carrying out a mechanical system of such standardization. Both of these impressions are misleading. The work of the Carnegie Foundation lies not in the fixing of standards, but in bringing into public discussion the question as to whether the standards fixed and maintained by teaching bodies are reasonable and fair and wisely administered.

The fear lest a central agency dealing with education might interfere with the independent life of institutions has been voiced by more than one university president. As the argument has been generally stated, it runs like this: The universities have hitherto led their lives independently. There is here introduced an agency which through its various activities is likely to interfere with this independent life.

Such an argument rests, to my thinking, upon a failure to distinguish between independence and freedom. The university, whether it be endowed or tax-supported, needs not independence, but freedom; and this does not mean freedom from the State, but freedom in the State. Only by placing itself upon an isolated island can a human institution like a university have absolute independence; but it may have freedom in any American commonwealth; a freedom, however, limited by regard for the rights and the interests of other institutions.

The high school could, if the argument for independence

were sound, criticize the university as interfering with the independent development of the secondary school. In truth, the college and university have interfered in very arbitrary fashion with the secondary schools; and it is only within recent years and through the pressure of public opinion that they have come to consider seriously their duties toward secondary schools. The true solution lies in a freedom which takes into account the rights and needs of all of these social and educational agencies with which the university must deal. In the long run, the universities and the high schools and the educational foundations will learn their true relations, and each will attain the full measure of freedom to which it is entitled. It is in such freedom, not in complete independence, that the problems of a democracy are to be wrought out; for one must admit that the educational foundations are also agencies of democracy which finds in each country agents for its work adapted to the environment and growing out of its own civilization. The educational foundations are the fruitage of large private fortunes. In any other country but America these fortunes would have gone more probably to found a family, to perpetuate a personal estate, or to hand on from generation to generation family pride and power. Their use so extensively for philanthropic purposes is distinctly American and distinctly democratic. They, like the endowed universities, are governed by boards of representative American citizens. They represent a distinctive effort of our time and of our people to deal with the problems of our civilization. Just as completely as the endowed universities, they are responsible to public opinion. They will affect the universities and the universities will affect them. They will influence secondary schools and be influenced by them. And this process makes for better understanding, for broader views, for a truer judgment of educational interests.

There is one other doubt which will remain in the minds of some who will admit the truth of all that has been said. It is this: The officers of the Carnegie Foundation administer at the same time a Pension Fund and a Division of Educational Inquiry. Will they not use the Pension Fund to help out an educational propaganda? Will they not approach the needy college with a pension in one hand and an educational prescription in the other?

The question is perfectly fair and it deserves a sincere answer.

There is no question but that at its beginning the reports of the Foundation upon educational matters received more

attention by reason of the fact that it was also a pension agency. It is also true that a very brief lease of power might be gained by using the pensions as a bolster for an educational programme. How small a rôle such a programme could play can be realized when one remembers that there are nearly a thousand colleges and universities, hundreds of normal schools, and over fifty State and provincial systems of education in the United States and Canada. With all of these the Carnegie Foundation seeks to establish an educational relation. At the most, it can pay pensions in a small minority of the colleges. Its contribution to the great mass of colleges, so far as pensions go, comes in the establishment of the college pension idea. Colleges are rapidly establishing their own pension systems. For the great number of colleges and for all normal schools and State and provincial systems no question of pensions arises. If at the beginning the pension idea influenced the action of a few colleges, that time has long gone by. Those who conduct the Foundation have ever before their minds this situation. They have leaned backward in the endeavor to avoid such a development. To-day the situation is perfectly understood by the colleges themselves; and the educational relation which the Foundation has with the colleges which never expect to share in its pensions is as active and as cordial as it is with any other college. All this those who are in education know. They also know that any possible influence to be derived from a pension fund is far outweighed by the power of educational publicity.

There is a second reason why the Foundation has not coupled its pensions with educational propaganda. It has no educational propaganda; no educational system to propose, no specific to recommend.

Finally, it is asked if there is to exist such an agency, viewing education from the standpoint of the whole nation, dealing with education as one thing and not as divided and unrelated things, publishing reports which have to do with the standards of school systems of the various States—ought not such an agency to be governmental? Should not such a function be exercised, if it is to be exercised at all, by the office of the United States Commissioner of Education?

The answer to this is clear. No privately endowed institution can ever take the place of a National Bureau of Education. Any privately endowed foundation which conceived of its functions in such terms would be doomed to failure. The most it can do is to study, to scrutinize, and to report.

There is just one reason why a governmental agency cannot at this time report critically on colleges and State systems of education. That reason everybody knows. It is politics. Every governmental Bureau, including that of Education, is politically governed. No Commissioner of Education could hold office permanently who undertook to tell the facts about education in the various States—in such a report, for example, as that of the Foundation's studies on medical education recently published, or that on legal education about to appear. It was tried a few years ago. A report was prepared in the Bureau of Education, making straightforward comparisons between educational institutions of certain classes in the various States. The moment the nature of its contents became known, the local institutions in many States appealed to their Congressmen and Senators, and they in turn to the President. The report was suppressed. It reposes peacefully upon the shelves of the Bureau. There it will continue to repose. And this situation will last just as long as the office of Commissioner of Education is subject to political pressure. Furthermore, the brethren who have recently been loudest in advocating a scrutiny by the Commissioner of Education, rather than that of the Educational Foundations, are the very ones who will appeal to their Senators and Representatives first if that scrutiny is made effective. This is the reason why an agency privately endowed, whose trustees represent the whole country, while it cannot take the place of a National Bureau of Education, can do certain work which at this time a Government bureau cannot do.

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